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"Sit now in your quiet home."

"They do; they miss their Mother. You married early & began with a nurse so capable that you gave the children up to her; she was followed by instructors as capable in their way; so that you have, in fact, all along been fixing place to some superior person."

"A true bill, I fear; but, to begin with the nurse, she was very kind, & I do think, cared for the children. Besides, she took excellent care of their health, a great matter to one who knew so little as I of children's ailments. She knew her value, & there was no course open but to part with her or let her have sole control in the nursery. Had you been at hand, things might have been different."

"Yes, Child, I know; you have always been most diffident, & your very regard for this foolish old Mother of yours has kept you from having needful confidence in yourself. I am much to blame that the pleasure I took in my gentle daughter blinded me to her deficiencies; you went to your new life sadly ignorant in many ways."

"Advise me now Mother; there may be up-hill work before me, but there are still three babies in the nursery & something might be done with them. I have not succeeded with the elders. Good & sweet children as they are, they have taken themselves out of my

my hands; not that they do much that is  
wrong, but they do what is right in their  
own eyes; I mean, when they do right -  
it is rather because it pleases them than  
from a sense of duty or thought of pleasing  
their father or me. He is a little at home,  
I see nothing wrong, but is proud of his  
children; and, indeed, you must not  
think they are bad; no mother could have  
seven brighter, more affectionate boys  
& girls."

"I am proud of my grand children, too; their  
joy & spiritfulness, their very independence  
& character, so charm me. I am only afraid  
of swimming with the stream; most likely  
I should soon retire from my duty &  
leave the young people to bring up themselves."  
"That is what troubles me; I shall, unconsciously  
retire from my duty; but, indeed, it  
is not easy to keep up with what somebody  
calls the pace of the nineteenth century.  
Then, what is a mother's duty in these  
days? Should she set her face against  
all the influences about them & try  
to train her children after the traditions  
of her own youth?"

"No; I have seen mothers do that, & do it  
successfully; but children so trained  
grow up behind the times; other young  
people vote them 'slow', leave them  
to themselves, & as they become more  
than even formerly dull, & out of sympathy  
with



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with what is passing about them. Besides,  
there is arrogance in supposing that the  
ways of our youth must be the best ways; we  
the children will be losers if we do not  
believe that God is educating the world;  
teaching, now, new & better things than  
belonged to our youth; & the new light  
which belongs to their own generation the  
children should be left open to receive.

"I do not see my way; this overpowering  
rush of new knowledge, new ideas, on  
the subject of education has, indeed,  
caused me to allow more advanced  
persons to take the children in hand. &  
is all beyond me."

"May a mother make over her responsibility  
to other persons? How far parents are  
concerned with the education of their  
children, in what way they are pledged to  
keep up with their young generation, be-  
comes a grave question when we come  
to deal with a Young Ireland, not too  
reverent, & fully ready to depend upon  
a new & glorious Italy. We are living in  
a new & remarkable age; ~~the world~~  
~~virtues are, doubtless, as pure as~~  
~~which succeeded ages ripen in a~~  
~~certain order.~~ The courage of this  
young people seems to us more heroic  
the sort of quality that used to be  
condemned in "a bold child," if their  
honesty seems audacious, their enterprise  
unfearful dash. It may be because we

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- we don't understand their latter  
developments. We need not reach out our  
wonder into what the world is coming to;  
something better than it has yet reached,  
no doubt; but while we make way for  
the new, we, too, have our part to perform.  
We must see ~~it~~ that the forces of  
valued in  
our own prime be bound up in the  
new bundles of life. But I speak as if  
you too, were a grand mother".

"Indeed, I feel so, as far as the children  
left me behind. It grieves me to see  
how little they know of the gentleness,  
deference, modest courtesy, you tried to  
instill into us. But what can I do?  
They are going upon new lines, ~~developing~~,  
in new ways, some qualities we cannot  
but admire; I cannot stop them in  
their career to enforce what as ~~the~~  
old fashioned virtues ~~of~~, which, somehow,  
do not fit in well with ~~the~~ ~~new~~ ~~day~~  
~~called~~ the character of the day."

"Then, I think you are wrong. it is the  
business of parents then to graft the best  
of the old upon the new; besides, this  
old fashioned regard for the opinions  
feelings of others is exactly the ballest  
which the character of the day needs  
to give its steadiness weight. But his  
duty is a difficult one; the elder generation  
cannot easily keep up with the advancing tide  
of



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of opinion, while they fall back the children  
go forward, following any lead in their way.  
Parents must see to it that they do not  
drop out of their natural & honourable  
office. If only men & women did not  
commit themselves on the most moment-  
ous of careers without the knowledge,  
power & purpose which should qualify  
them for it! A joiner, a lawyer, a  
doctor, must be brought up to his business  
but, because any man who chooses  
may marry, very few take the trouble  
to fit themselves for the vocation of  
fatherhood.

"I hardly see what qualification could be  
acquired; a father should be a wise &  
upright man, no doubt; but is not  
that every man's positive duty? In  
that every man's positive duty? In  
his relative duty as a father he does  
but bring out whatever of wisdom or  
goodness is in him?"

"He should at least know something  
of the very composite nature of a child,  
should have considered what education  
ought to effect, & then made up his  
mind as to his own part in the training  
of a family. People are beginning to see  
that this kind of special preparation is to  
be desired for all teachers, & how much  
more valuable would it be to parents,  
under whose hands their children first take form."

But

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But there is a difference between parents & teachers. Does not the sympathy with his children & the natural insight which comes to a mother cloud her in stead of much of this sort of preparation, which must simply deepreading & much thinking - rather appalling to think of? Then, how could poor uneducated parents ever do well under such conditions?

Parents are, as many will believe, helped in a peculiar way; but ignorance is seldom docile, & therefore, in spite of all guiding, many do, as a fact, go indolently or stubbornly wrong in their treatment of their children. This may account for what has been set down to the discredit of religion, that a good man's life may be embittered by unworthy children. ~~he has not the means~~ ~~that is in them, and how to treat them~~ ~~the ignorance which ever possesses if~~ ~~no one of a natural law has come~~ ~~after him.~~ For the poor who do not regret the ill effects of their untaught condition, the bad habits, the want of principle, which too often make servants a trial, & fill the Sunday School teachers with dismay?

"But am I right in thinking that your suggestion covers such a course of reading in moral & in physical sciences as few middle class people would have time for, & which seems to me utterly beyond the reach of the labouring poor? Surely the spread of Christianity should avail more, after all, than a wiser knowledge



of the principles of education," 16

"Christianity should constrain a man to do well - that he knows how to do, but - does not - instruct him in any workman's art - does not make a man a tailor, or a cook.

Perhaps only a Christian man is capable of educating his children in the fullest sense. Yet, being this, loving the truth & shunning a lie, a father may, for want of other knowledge, bring up his children to decide themselves & him: into formalism, ex-mans, over-Christness, he may ignorantly err. It is a man's duty to know, therefore, I think, we have no reason to suppose that any superhuman means will be employed to supplement our ignorance."

"No doubt - the sort of knowledge you speak of is desirable, & even necessary; but it still seems to me quite beyond the range of ordinary people?"

"Human physiology, mental & moral science, theology, all deal, it is true, with the nature, well-being, & relations of human beings, & thus covers a wide field. But of practical & thoughtful mind, may, it seems to me, gather the broad principles which should regulate action without any deep study or universal learning. Indeed, it is much to be desired that there should be brought - home in simple forcible words to the 'unlearned ignorant', so that everyman should at least know what is due to the soul nature of his child."

"Yes, I do think a course of lectures on how to educate our children, would be fine to many parents. We have all seen parents act-

act in a wrong & foolish way off their children  
without being at all aware of it.

(Spencer)

"Let us suppose a Mother, like myself, dissatisfied  
with things as they are, & anxious to take up her  
dropped stitches, how should she set about it?"

"I can only pretend to answer as having brought  
up my children over again - thought & read a  
good deal on the subject of a Mother's duties  
when it had become too late to perform them.

You shall make what you can of my after-wisdom  
to answer your question; this not impossible  
mother should, I think, try to keep up with  
the times, should know what is being done &  
thought in the world, that her children may  
not come to regard her opinions with indulgent  
superiority."

"But so many things are taught in schools  
now, science & history, languages & literature  
& I know not what besides; were there nothing  
else to be done I am not clever enough to keep  
up with the boys?"

Probably not; but you might keep up with  
current thought upon these subjects; master  
the outlines of their various studies without  
attempting the details which the student  
must acquire laboriously. School-teaching,  
now, moulds the opinions of young people upon  
practical matters, & it is her own fault when  
her verdict on a question right or wrong  
is set aside with 'Mother ~~knows~~ does not  
understand.'"

"But how is one to get at these general outlines?"



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"Never was this so easy; there are to be had beautiful little books, upon almost every subject, written by thoughtful & scientific men, who ~~would~~ ~~show~~ ~~the~~ ~~mythologies to us as 'unlearned & ignorant'!~~ & show us the rational of the matters they treat of without embarrassing us with details. Never before were the high priests of ~~fleecing~~ so helpful & brotherly. The

least